

True Mate Saga Book One: Demetri
by IAMIniquity

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Summary: 'I've waited a thousand years for a flighty absolute mess of a human,' He growled. Demetri thinks the gods he's a tracker. Unfortunately for his mate, the 21 year old free-spirited hot mess Delphia Payne, she can't get away from him. He's caught her and he's never letting her go. First in a series. T for now, rating subject to change.

1. Prologue

**Disclaimer: **IAMIniquity does not own Twilight or anything that belongs to Steph Meyer. She literally owns an ugly sun spotted Toyota, a laptop, a kindle, and some clothes she got thrift shopping because she isn't about that spending fifty dollars on a t-shirt life. So don't sue her because she's just a broke 24-year-old college student with too much debt already.

Yo ho ho ho a ramen life for me!

Beta Love: MissVolturiKingsfan- who's fantastic.

**True Mate Saga Book One: **Demetri

** Prologue**

A hooded, cloaked figure strode boldly down the dimly lit streets of Volterra. The sound of its footsteps were non-existent but the scent expelled from it in droves, alerting the cities' nightlife to its ethereal feminine presence. She could feel her own anxiety climbing with every step closer to the castle she took. Her fear gripping nearly paralyzing she was afraid that her gift would not be accepted, as it wasn't useful for the kings' benefit or for battle. Then again, there was always the option that her ability could be used to the benefit of the kings. Cruel as it was, her gift had the flexibility to be utilized in that way. Not that she wished it

so.

Still, the woman continued to glide across the stone streets with only one destination in mind, against her coven's better judgment. Mentally she accosted herself for her boldness. Was it alright to just appear in Volterra? She didn't know if it were against the law, perhaps an appointment would have been necessary? How does one make an appointment with the Vampire Kings? Call 1 800 Volturi and schedule your appointment today!

Her frantic mental arguing screeched to a halt when she felt them. Two vampires, almost materializing beside her.

"What do we have here, Felix?" One chimed, voice a low but elegant baritone, almost playfully speaking to the other.

The woman glanced at the two through the stitching of her cloak to find that they were both wearing much thicker hoods than she. She realized they could easily see her face, and she had no luck in seeing theirs. Had she a heart, it would be thundering loudly in her chest in this moment. Regardless of her intentions for tonight, meeting Volturi guard members was an intimidating experience. Fear was a natural and undoubtedly expected reaction.

"A nomad, perhaps?" The one called Felix responded, his voice deep and resonating, sending a shiver of fear down her spine, she did her best to conceal it, squashing her anxiety as best as she could. Which wasn't well, mind you.

"Your presence begs the question, are you visiting or simply passing through?" The first vampire spoke once again, directing his questions at the woman.

The woman, taking a deep unnecessary breath to calm her nerves so they would not show in her speech, answered quickly giving the barest of details, "I am not a nomad, but I have left my coven to seek audience with the Volturi."

The gruff response from the one called Felix was rather chilling in the tone he'd used to deliver it, "Then you shall not be kept waiting."

They walked quietly at a human pace, turning down a main road and walking passed a fountain. Even in the night no detail of the magnificent stone structure was lost on the vampires. The light of the moon reflected delicately on the surface of the water, casting beautiful moonlight glow across the fountains surface. Every fine line, every speck of dirt, and even the newly forming algae around the ring of the basin was evident to the three, but only the woman was engrossed by its beauty.

"Impressive, no?" The one called Felix asked her as he held a door to the building on the far left of the statue. He'd taken notice to the woman's enthralled expression as her eyes followed the piece of historical artwork whilst they walked forward.

She simply nodded, hoping to squash his interest before he was to ask too many questions. She hoped to only answer to the Volturi, if it were possible. She flashed him a small, respectful smile as she passed through the open door behind the nameless vampire, feeling

rather than hearing the door shut behind her and Felix following closely. Quickly they came to a hole in the ground and the vampire before her jumped casually, the sound of his graceful landing evident only a second following his departure.

"Demetri will catch you, if he is needed." Felix assured, his tone teasing.

The woman scoffed, and jumped down into the hole. There was no light, but she could easily see the ground and the one called Demetri, whom had now dropped his hood. His face held a certain neutral expression, causing his high cheekbones and defined jawline to look naturally gaunt. His crimson eyes were in a deep setting, adding easily to his dark and mysterious appearance.

As she fell, she had quickly become sidetracked in her careful contemplation of the vampire below her and she was just milliseconds from hitting the floor ungracefully when his arms snapped out to catch her. His hand brushed a small exposed area of her midsection and she gasped audibly, suddenly swaying where he had placed her on her feet as her gift came to the forefront. A blast of information and images surged within her mind's eye. At the end, a face, a name, and a location were the only things she was left. The memories she had been assaulted with faded away as she was no longer able to retain the information.

But the face, the name, and the location would remain.

Such had been the case since before she could remember.

Demetri looked at the woman questioningly, but she did not speak. He grew suspicious but, considering her mission to speak with the Volturi, knew it was not his place to question what Aro would soon see. The guard was on a need-to-know basis, and Demetri knew what was and was not acceptable in the eyes of his masters.

Felix landed a few seconds later and they resumed their trek to the throne room, ignoring what had just transpired. As they walked the woman withdrew into herself, attempting to regain some of the flashes that had overtaken her. It wasn't often she had the chance to exercise her gift on vampires, which was why it had been difficult for her to hone her skills. She knew she should probably pay closer attention to the halls she was being led through, but her gift was more important at the moment, as it was the one thing that she could use to help others of her kind.

Her thoughts were pulled to a stop when her body nearly collided with Demetri's in front of her. She halted in her steps a mere inch away from his ridged back and attempted to keep her eyes focused ahead of her, hoping they hadn't seen her near accident.

What kind of vampire am I, for Christ sakes? She scolded herself.

Demetri and Felix quickly made to stand in front of her, now both facing her they were sure to flash her a secretive smile that told her they hadn't missed her near run in, though they didn't say anything about it.

"Please wait here while we announce you, may we have your

name?"

"Aurora of the Empire Coven." Demetri nodded before he and Felix both disappeared through the immaculate door that stood imposingly before her.

When she was alone she tried in vain to calm her nerves. This was it. Her coven had warned her not to come but she refused to listen. She would not allow for her talent to be wasted when it would be so detrimental to many of her kind. Demetri- he would surely suffer unknowingly if she hadn't met him today. She would soon tell him what she had seen, regardless of if she were proven useful to the Volturi or not. He deserved to know.

She was not left waiting for long, a new Vampire, very small in stature with blond hair pulled tightly into a bun and a vacant expression pulled open the doors, staring the woman down. The girl was almost child-like in appearance. She had clearly been very young when turned. A pang of sorrow swelled Aurora's undead chest. Although, if it weren't for the girls' schooled vacant look, Aurora would think that this young looking vampire was giving her the evil eye.

"Aro will see you now." Her voice, like bells, chimed through the hollow entrance hall causing an almost shiver to once again trail down the woman's spine.

This was it, there was no turning back. Aurora quickly stepped into the room and, although it was expansive with elegant architecture, it was the three thrones and their occupants that drew her attention. She cared none for the vampires surrounding the room, the ones that more often than not were the ones to rip offending vampires to shreds and burn them. She cared little for the giant letter V that was sculpted meticulously into the floor.

What drew her attention were the Vampire Kings themselves.

She'd only heard of them. Her coven stayed out of trouble and so she had, in her nearly fifty-year immortal life, never had a run in with the authority of the vampire world. Seeing them face to face was quiet the experience. From their sophisticated, unworldly, faces to their clothes that cost more than most people's homes they practically dripped royalty and screamed power. She briefly entertained the idea that they must have been princes as humans, or at least noblemen of a sort, and wondered just how old they actually were.

This time, Aurora was not caught up in her thoughts as she witnessed the raven haired vampire King, Aro, raise from his chair and clamp his hands together underneath his chin. He smiled down at her and it sent a jolt of instinct that screamed DANGER as he descended his throne with such grace that it would have a human fascinated, a vampire enraptured.

Aurora bowed slightly as he reached her, even though it was against every feminist urge she had ever had to do so, out of respect for the Vampire King. His small chuckle briefly pierced the silence in the room and she raised up, removing her hood for the first time and allowing a cascade of blonde waves flow from the now fallen cloth. "Aurora of the Empire coven, it is a pleasure to meet you." Aro held

out his hand to her, and she placed hers in his.

Her maker had warned her of Lord Aro's gift, but she had expected to feel the invasion of her mental privacy beyond the touch of his hand. She was actually quite surprised to find that she felt nothing. No tingling sensation or alarm, just the feeling of his hand in hers.

It was rather bizarre, to think that every thought and experience that had ever entered her mind was flowing freely into his. But just as the moment passed a new sense was emerging, the same as she'd had when Demetri had accidentally brushed her skin with his. Aurora's mind erupted with erratic images of a woman with dark hair. Her name was Sulpicia, and she was somewhere within this castle.

"_Affascinate_!" He exclaimed, retracting his hand from Aurora's and offering a dashing smile, "For one of our kind to hold the information of our eternal happiness at the brush of a finger! How wonderful it must be."

If she could blush, Aurora felt that she would be doing so now. She was humbled by Aro's reaction to her gift. "Please forgive my intrusion, I came in hopes that my gift may be of better use here than it would be lazing about my home."

Aro's hands once again met underneath his chin as he answered. Aurora could almost see the gears turning in his head, "Of course, dear Aurora, of course!"

Just as the words had left Aro's mouth another voice erupted across the distinguished room. This one was far darker and demanding than Aro's light and feathery tones. It gave an impression of contempt and anger. Aurora figured that this voice, coming from the blond King, must belong to Lord Caius.

"We tire of your prattling, Aro, do enlighten the rest of us to which you have seen."

Something akin to anger quickly flashed through Aro's eyes, Aurora had only briefly glimpsed it before it was gone once again, his friendly demeanor seeping through once more as he looked towards the other vampires in the room.

"Aurora, progeny of Michael of the Empire coven in the northeastern United States, has the ability to see the _true_ mate of any being she happens to have physical contact with. Human and Vampire alike." Aro announced, a gleeful smile upon his face.

All of the sudden it was as if someone had opened the flood gate on whispers in the room. Though the guard members were speaking among themselves their comments and their conversations could easily be heard by every vampire in the room. Some comments were flattering, others were not. Particularly coming from the child-like blonde vampire in the corner to an equally child-like brunet vampire beside her.

"Silence, please, my friends. Do you not see it? Dear Aurora, with one touch, can tell us if our mates have yet to live, have passed on, or are currently alive and waiting for us. What could be more prudent

to our kind than finding our true mate? The likes of which few of our kind have ever found."

Aurora was instantly filled with a sense of dread. She couldn't place it, every word that came from Aro's mouth seemed like it was innocent. He sounded as though he truly cared about his people, and he honestly wished to see them mated, sated, and happy. However, something was wrong. There was some sort of sinister purpose for his instant excitement and acceptance of her gift.

She was kept from her musings when the blond king, Lord Caius, spoke almost venomously, directing his question to her. "And what limitations do you have?"

"I cannot recall everything I see," she began quickly, "if the mate of the one I touch is alive only a name, a location, and a face will remain, and although I believe I see far more than that, this is all that retains when the vision is over. I can feel if the mate has already transcended this life, or if they have yet to live. It is rare that I see a mate currently living. Over the years, I have encountered only four who's mates were currently alive and they weren't already mated to them. One was a vampire already, and the other three were human."

"The humans were then turned; I imagine?" Caius' voice did not lose its venom as he spoke.

"One was turned soon after I informed the vampire of her mate, as he was already a bit older than comfortable for her. The other is still human and has yet to be approached with our world for she was only eight years old when I saw her, she will be turned after she reaches adulthood."

"The last one?"

"I have not yet informed the vampire I have witnessed their mate. It happened recently."

Caius said no more. Instead, he rose from his throne. From the looks on the faces of the guard members in the room this was an action that did not happen often. He glided, much like Aro had, down to the floor and halted in front of Aurora, holding his hand out for her to take.

Aurora obliged and within seconds of touching Caius' hand was assaulted with a deep sense of humanity and laughter. There were no memories and no names, just a forlorn sense of time. Decades, in fact. Caius quickly wrenched his hand out of her grasp and Aro held his hand out for her to show him what she had seen. She touched Aro's hand and he grinned while Caius looked as if he were ready to rip the heads off of every vampire in the room. Impatiently, he spoke up.

"Well?" Caius asked gruffly.

Aurora offered him a gentle smile, "Your true mate has yet to be born, Lord Caius. Another fifty to eighty years from now, I estimate."

"Ah! She can estimate time of arrival, magnificent!" Aro spoke, while

Caius looked almost stunned into silence.

Suddenly a shrill cry erupted from the right of the throne room as a blonde woman, roughly five foot and five inches came gracefully barreling at Aurora. Not knowing what to do, Aurora attempted to side-step the woman, and only succeeded in making her even more angry. The blonde woman grabbed the back of Aurora's head and slammed her down against the stone floor. Something told Aurora not to fight back. "Caius is my true mate, you're a fraud!" she hissed.

Images swarmed Aurora's mind as she felt her skin crack underneath the pressure of the woman's hands. "Your mate is alive, he lives in Russia and goes by the name of Victor!"

Aro's piercing laughter echoed across the hall. Surprisingly, it was Caius who commanded attention and action, "Athenodora, release Aurora at once." He thundered.

Athenodora's face morphed from anger to shame in less than a few seconds, holding her hand out to actually help Aurora from her spot on the floor. Sensing that the woman before her was shocked by the revelation of her true mate, Aurora understood. Though, still, Aurora glared at the blonde woman and stood on her own, ignoring the offered hand. It was a statement; Aurora would not forgive Athenodora for having attacked. Though the cause was justified.

Caius placed his right hand on the small of Athenodora's back, "We will look into your mate. For the time being, go back to your room and remain there until called for."

As Athenodora, head bowed and ashamed, made her way out of the double doors Aro grasped everyone's attention once again. His hands in their usual spot he took to circling Aurora like a vulture ready to swoop down and kill, or in this case, grasp in his vice like grip. Aurora almost wondered if she had made a mistake in coming here, but already her gift had told Caius his mate was not far from being born, Athenodora that her mate was alive, and she'd deciphered that Demetri's mate was also alive.

It was as if fate had made sure she would come to the Volturi, before it was too late for these vampires to meet their mates.

"Now, Aurora, my brother's and I will have to discuss whether you belong among the Volturi. If it were solely my decision you would begin training to be a member of this coven tonight. I do believe, as I have seen in your thoughts, that there is one other vampire you wish to inform of a living mate." Aro looked at Aurora pointedly, "You may do so now."

Aurora, understanding what has been asked of her, turned to view Demetri once again. His eyes widened by a small fraction in surprise. He had simply been listening patiently to the conversations before him. It was never his job to intervene or make statements. If asked directly he would have to admit that the idea of finding his mate would have intrigued him. As Aurora's bright red eyes met his crimson orbs he almost felt as if his undead heart beat in his chest.

"Demetri, you happened to brush some of my skin when you caught me earlier. In that brief contact I saw your mate. Her name is Delphia

Payne; she lives in the city of Detroit in the state of Michigan. Her face looks young, late teenager to early twenties."

Demetri couldn't decipher the surge of emotions that nearly overwhelmed him. These all came to a vicious halt when he realized that he wouldn't be available to visit and meet his mate until he had earned some off from the Volturi, and that was rare seeing as how he was their number one tracker. Perhaps he could put in a request to Aro in the next few days. If his mate was old enough he would surely court her for a few weeks and then turn her.

"Ah!" Aro exclaimed excitedly, "I believe you have earned some time to yourself, Demetri. Perhaps two months would suffice as a brief hiatus?"

Demetri's face lost its expressionless veneer and erupted into a very small, yet oddly satisfying smile as he bowed to his master, not questioning Aro's intentions in the slightest. "Thank you, master."

Aro smiled down on his tracker and floated elegantly back to his throne, Caius following dutifully. Marcus had sat like a statue throughout the entire exchange, not once had he so much as flinched. The moment Aro was seated, Marcus' hand stretched across the gap in between their chairs and Aro held out his hand. Marcus' right index finger brushed his brother's outstretched palm. There was a brief and unnatural quiet that stilled the room. Not a single vampire took an unnecessary breath or moved an inch.

"Caius, your vote?" Aro questioned the blond with an eyebrow raised.

Caius, who Aurora was certain would not care for her gift, actually surprised her. "Although her gift has caused an upheaval in my marriage, I have to say that the knowledge of the impending birth of my true mate has greatly made up for the trouble. I can see the advantage to this vampire joining our ranks. Should she prove useless in the next decade we can reevaluate the situation. For now, I vote that she join the Volturi."

"It is rare, indeed, that a vampire receives a unanimous vote of confidence from the Volturi to join our coven. Let me be the first to welcome you, Aurora." Aro stated warmly, eyes glinting mischievously, before acknowledging his guard, "No one is to touch Aurora without first gaining permission from us. We will not have everyone at once learn of their mate, especially if more turn up to be living, currently. It will be an earned privilege."

No one questioned Aro's decision.

"Felix, Demetri, please escort Aurora to an unused suite."

As she followed the two who had brought her into the Volturi in the first place, Felix asked Aurora a question that no one had once thought to ask her before, and she was filled with a surge of _something_ that she couldn't identify. Perhaps it was loneliness, perhaps it was something deeper. Whatever it was, it hurt.

"Can you see or sense your own mate?" The large vampire asked, drawing the curiosity of Demetri who glanced at the small blonde

vampire.

Aurora smiled sadly, "No, Felix, I can't. I never have."

* * *

><p>Author's Message

Welcome to the True Mate Saga! This is only book one, I have planned at least another three. Aurora is actually not the main character of this particular book, but she will be reoccurring and she will play a major part in every one with the last one being her story. She's the catalyst for many events to come so I hope you like her; even though you don't get to see much of her personality here.

This book centers around a Demetri/OC pairing, as you read above the OC in this book is named Delphia (Della). She will make her appearance in Chapter One, as most of the story is in her point of view. Only two out of the four are OC pairings, one is a crack ship, and one is cannon.

_Be advised - I'm not scared to kill off supporting/minor characters.

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I hope you like this idea as much as I do. I would like to inform you all that I am a college student, so there will be times that I'll be hard pressed for my time and will have to neglect this story. I won't abandon it, so you can take solace in that fact. This saga is my practice for writing my own novel, and with that being said I am determined to finish it and make it the best I can.

If you're here because you're on my Author's Alerts from another story that I have put on Hiatus- I'm sorry! I won't be working on any of my Naruto stuff for a while. Inspiration got up, slapped me in the face, grabbed its suitcase and tore outta here like a hooker that stole your wallet, leaving me writing in agony over my lost muse.

To everyone else â€“ please don't forget to review, alert, or favorite this story if you like it! Updates come faster when you **feed the beast**!

Om Nom Nom _REVIEWS_ & FAVS_!

2. Chapter One

Beta Love: MissVoltriKingsfan

**True Mate Saga Book One: **Demetri

Chapter One

He really was a lovely man

"What the fuck does Della stand for, anyways? Isn't that like an old lady's name?"

A tangled, matted, rat's nest of long, straight, orange-red mane swayed sideways at its wearers instantaneous movement. In slow motion the young woman flicked her half smoked cigarette to the pavement,

squashing its lit cherry underneath her scuffed up vans. She glared at the boy who had spoken, eyeliner half smudged down into the bags underneath her eyes and mascara flaked everywhere, giving a rather devil may care look to her ocean blue orbs.

It had been a rough night, but dear Christ was it a good one.

"Listen, Jâ€| um, Jeremy was it?" She began, her voice like nails on a chalk board after a long night of tequila and belting music at the top of her lungs in a foolhardy attempt to be louder than the band on stage. Her head was pounding, causing her to become irritable easily. When the boy confirmed his name with a brief nod she continued, "Last night was fun and all, but I really have to be getting home now."

He flashed her a toothy grin, his brown eyes lighting up his face like he had accomplished something brilliant. Della fought the urge to either punch him or laugh in his perfectly sculpted baby face. She couldn't actually remember much of last night passed midnight, when the drinks started getting to be less fruity as the alcohol content soared, urged by the impending last call. Whatever it was that this boy thought he'd accomplished in order to wear that confident smile on his round face, he hadn't.

But hey, a kid can dream.

"Alright, well, let me write down my number so we can meet up next weekend. Maybe we could go up to the Machine Shop in Flint and see whatever they've got going on sometime." He winked. Della wanted to vomit.

"Yeah, maybe. I haven't been there in a few months." It was a lie; she'd been there just three weeks ago with a friend she'd met on the beach at Lake Erie several months prior, during the summer.

She never spoke to the girl again after that concert.

His left hand dug into his pocket and his smile dropped, "Damn, I left my cell inside. Just a sec, I'll write my number down and bring it back out."

The second the boy was in the door Della was gone.

Her life had been this way since as long as she could remember. Leaving baby-faced Jeremy behind to scratch his head and wonder where he'd gone wrong was one of the nicer things she had done in the past twenty-one years of her life. She couldn't justify it; she just didn't make long term commitments, and to her long term meant anything over a couple months. Della hadn't even had a friend for longer than six months in her life.

It wasn't that she was a loner, she was easily probably one of the most extroverted people in existence. She was just, _flighty_. What's the point in garnishing friendships when you're never in a place for more than a few months? That's not to say that she hadn't tried in her younger years to maintain a companionship of sorts, but before cell phones, it had been difficult, and now she just couldn't be bothered with maintaining friendships. Friends came and went, they flew in like a seagull after some greasy fries and they were gone again by the time the tides rolled out.

All that mattered in this world was family, and she'd lost her family five years ago. Sure, she currently lived with her Gramps in his beat up house just outside of the Detroit City limits, one of the neighborhoods that had yet to completely succumb to the dealers and crackheads. But out of her fragmented family, her Gramps was the only one that even remotely mattered to her anymore. The rest of them were stuck in the mud types, slowly sinking and covered in shit, not to mention anal retentive. One was even an in and out of jail drug abuser type. It was a wonder the people weren't on anti-depressants, because being around them surely made Della hanker for a mood stabilizer of some kind.

No, they didn't matter. Her mom, she mattered. Evelyn Payne, died of a kidney infection that her dilapidated immune system couldn't power through. Lupus was a bitch of a disease, and it had stolen Della's mom at a mere thirty-two years old. Della was by her side every step of the way. From her mother's diagnosis in Memphis, to her first real bout of it in Vegas, and all the way until the end when things had gotten so bad that Evelyn decided it would be best to go back home, to Detroit, and stay with her father for her end game.

It was a decision that landed Della where she was now. Stuck in the proverbial black hole that is Detroit, Michigan. Sure, it was rich with a culture and history of its own and she loved it. She was born here after all, before her Mom had bought the travel trailer they'd voyaged the country together. In her ten years on the road with her mother she was able to witness many parts of America that most people her Gramps' age hadn't. She'd been to the mall of America, seen Mt. Rushmore, held her mom's hair back in Vegas while she puked, been to the Grand Canyon, and so much more.

They hadn't stayed anywhere for more than six months, just enough time for Evelyn, Lyn as she liked to be called, to put back enough money so they could travel somewhere else. They stopped whenever they ran out of gas money until they could get some. At times they'd been so broke that every meal they'd acquired had been through a soup kitchen or otherwise homeless shelter. But if a volunteer approached them to offer sympathy it would be brushed off and sorely misplaced. Instead, the concerned volunteer would be subject to stories that would have them almost rolling on the floor with laughter. Lyn and Della were happy, too content with their lives for any sort of pity to be afforded to them.

From four until fourteen that was the life Della knew. When they'd come to Michigan, Della had been forced into a public school. After having to be home-schooled her whole life, she almost didn't realize how you were supposed to act in a classroom setting. It was like a scene out of Mean Girls, when Cady gets up to go to the bathroom without asking and gets told to sit down, practically having to cross your legs to keep from pissing yourself- yeah that had been Della for the first couple of months. It was as if every move she made was scrutinized and wrong. She became bored quickly with the things they taught in class, things that she'd already learned in her years of homeschooling. When her teachers realized she was beyond their subject, the faculty tried to push for her to join AP classes, and her mother thought it was a good idea.

Della did alright in AP, to be honest. She'd exited high school with a 2.7 GPA and the only reason she didn't get a higher score was

because she just honestly didn't care. Her mom was dying and Della was busy trying to take care of her and spend every last moment she had by her side. She lost her Mom at sixteen. Right in the middle of her sophomore year. If she could have dropped out she might have, but her Gramps wouldn't have allowed it.

She could remember like it was yesterday, 'If you're going to be living with me you will have a job, and an education!' It was the firmest her Gramps had ever been towards her and she commended him for putting his foot down.

And so that lead to today, feeling trapped in Detroit, being a waitress five nights a week at a local diner, and taking a couple classes at a time at the nearest community college in order to gain some kind of degree. College was at her Gramps' insistence. If he hadn't sold the travel trailer before she'd gotten her license then Della would've been gone at eighteen, back to a familiar lifestyle, one that she missed deeply.

Della sighed from her position behind the wheel of her beat up Oldsmobile when her phone started blasting the theme music to American Horror Story. She picked it up and answered the call, not bothering to see who it was, because there was a one percent chance that it wasn't her Gramps.

"Hello?"

"Delphia, good morning. Are you coming home?" His rough and tough old man voice came loudly through the speaker. With age came hearing loss, and because he could barely hear you he thought you must have a difficult time hearing him, and so his need to shout your ear off intensified with every syllable that pushed through the receiver. It was quite humorous.

He really was a lovely man.

"Yeah I'm on my way now. Had a rough night at the diner and ended up having to stay a little while longer than usual," while it was true that Della worked graveyard at the Diner, she did not work the weekends. Her Gramps didn't know this, and he would never catch on because the man went to bed at 9 pm sharp.

"That's alright, Hun, I was calling to ask if you could run through the pharmacy and pick up my medications?"

Della internally groaned, "I'll do that, sure. Be home in a bit."

"Thanks sweet pea."

As they hung up Della quickly pulled a brush from her overly large tote bag she kept in her backseat for occasions like these. As she drove she raked the bristles through her matted hair and vowed to buy a leave in conditioner that might help with the tangles next time this happens. When she made it to the pharmacy parking lot she took a makeup remover wipe from the back seat bag and washed all that flaked and running mascara and eyeliner from her face. When she was satisfied she quickly threw her ridiculous mane up into a pony tail and left her car.

Usually Della wouldn't care about her appearance but one of her Gramps' best friends was the lead Pharmacist at this particular establishment. If she showed up there looking like a hot mess that had far too much fun the night before, well, it wouldn't be long until her Gramps heard about it and Della didn't want to go there. Thankfully she never dressed up when she went out for the night, and since it was winter no one would question her attire, because winter coats were the best.

Honestly, her Gramps and his friends gossiped almost as bad as the ladies on the church choir.

The bell rang as she opened the wide grocery doors, signaling a customer's entrance to the store. She quickly made her way to the back, smiling at everyone she passed. She'd always done so. It was rare that a scowl graced her features, the only reason she'd glared at the baby-faced Jeremy that morning was for asking about her name. That was a massive no-go for Della.

"Ah, Delphia! Your presence is a much-needed sunshine on this dreary winter morning," The pharmacist, Herman Read, grinned a wide lopsided smile as he saw her.

Della smiled broadly in return, swallowing her laugh at his words as she answered, "Herman, darling, I must apologize! I'm afraid this isn't a social call!"

Mr. Read placed his liver spotted hand on his heart, "My dear Delphia how you wound me terribly, perhaps another time! What might I do for you today, Miss Payne?" He winked.

They'd mock flirted like a late nineteenth century/early twentieth century courtship for years, Delphia because she got a kick out of the old man and Herman because he loved the girls' quick wit. The assistants at the pharmacy thought to two were incredible and that the banter was almost inappropriate, but they couldn't help smiling. It had become a joke between Della and Herman's wife, Sarah, that Della was trying to catch herself a rich man. The words were never spiteful, Sarah knew it was all in play.

If there was ever a couple still in love after fifty years, it was Herman and Sarah.

"Alas, darling Herman, it is my Grandfather!" Della's face turned solemn as she relayed the devastating news, "He's nearly run out of medication, you see, and if it is not replaced soon I worry for his decrepit joints as arthritis sets in!"

Herman's gasp was audible, "Delphia! This will simply not do!"

"That is not even the whole of it, Herman, he's also nearly run the course of his blood pressure and heart medications!" Della brushed the back of her hand against her forehead, "Please, darling Herman, if there's anything you can do for my Grandfather, I beseech you to hurry!"

"My dear, you do not have to ask for I have procured your Grandfather's medicine in the form of capsules! Please, take care to remind him that he is to take all medicines once with every meal to relieve him of the pain that his age demands he feel! I could not

stand to see you suffer more."

Della's eyes grew wide and her smile radiant, "Oh- darling Herman, whatever would we do without you?" Her arms flared out in front of her and she drew him into a hug over the counter. When she released him she slipped her debit card through the machine, as the total was already flashing.

"Do not fret, Delphia, for I will always be here to procure medicinal assistance!" He stated, mock bowing and dipping his head so low that his comb over nearly brushed the counter.

"Good day- sweet Herman! I hope to speak to you soon!" Della waved, the grin never leaving her face.

Herman's laughter could be heard until she exited the front door of the store. Once back in her car, pill bag in hand, Delphia was off once more. This time she wasn't far from home. It only took a few minutes and she was pulling in the short driveway and shutting off her car.

Her Gramps' house wasn't all that impressive. It was a brick two story with a nice little porch that had four brick columns holding up the roof. The back there was a quarter acre of property and a fire pit that was dug when Gramps' wife was still alive and a derelict swing set that hadn't been used since Della's mom had been a child. The back garage remained locked securely, hiding a 1969 Ford Shelby, GT500 Mustang in a mint condition with only twenty thousand original miles on it. It was her Gramps' pride and joy, even if it had only been driven a handful of times in the past fifty years. Her grandfather was a Ford retiree, and with a deep sense of loyalty and pride he'd never purchased anything other.

Della unlocked the side door and stepped inside, quick to lock the door behind her and kick her shoes in the general direction of the shoe mat near the dryer. Instantly she was assaulted with the fresh, clean scent of home and something that was very close to the smell of apple pie. She smiled slightly and walked down the hall that was lined with hundreds of pictures, a bitch and a half to dust on cleaning day but the memories each picture held were priceless. Not a single picture was a simple portrait, they were all Kodak moments.

She picked up that trait from the grandmother she'd never met, apparently.

As Della made her way towards the kitchen she could hear her Gramps prattling about. "If that's apple pie I smell you're going to be in trouble with your doctor, young man!" she called just as she turned the corner into the small, cramped kitchen.

Louis Payne had aged rather well. In his seventies now, he still had the look of a fifty-year-old man, although his white hair protests the notion. His wrinkled face wasn't as wrinkled as one would expect, but for the laugh lines that had formed after years of mischief and fun. His brown eyes always gave off an amused hint to his demeanor, which was why Della could hardly ever take him seriously despite the fact that he had tried to be firm with her several times over the years.

"It's sugar-free." Was all he said, giving his granddaughter a wink and a smile as he opened the medicine bag she placed on the counter.

"I bet my ass it's not," She responded indignantly, but smiled back nonetheless.

He laughed as he was putting the pills away, "Don't tell your aunt."

Della scoffed, "I'm not suicidal."

It was a known fact Louis' eldest daughter was a controlling, drug addicted, psychopath. Whenever she wasn't the one in charge of the show she got angry, and when she got angry there was a fair chance that you would be swept up in a whirlwind of flying objects and harsh words. No one was safe, even the little only lady in the grocery store who accidentally bumped carts with aunt Mary would fall prey to her spiteful behavior.

Although she wasn't diagnosed bipolar, everyone knew she was. She'd been one of the main reasons Lyn had taken Della and left town for ten long years. Mary had almost beaten her own sister into an early grave herself at eighteen during a flare of anger. All over who Della's father was, something that Lyn had taken with her to the grave. Not that it mattered to Della, she didn't particularly care, she had lived a full life without a father and if he one day got in contact with her she probably wouldn't spare him a second of thought. Aunt Mary was someone that even Della didn't cross purposefully. It wasn't that Della was afraid of a fight- she simply didn't want to cause more problems for her Gramps, because he was the one who always bailed Mary out of jail.

"Good thing, too. Do you want some brunch?" He questioned, pulling some pans out from their place in the cupboards, "I wasn't up for anything this morning but I think waffles are in order."

Della smiled and got up to retrieve the package of sausages from the fridge. "Alright, old man, waffles and sausages then I'm upstairs finishing my homework before bed."

They laughed and joked while they made breakfast together, it was a typical morning for them and it didn't surprise Della one bit that her Gramps had waited until she got home from 'work' to make breakfast for himself. It was something they'd been doing since the day she'd arrived with her mother at fourteen; the only routine she'd ever truly had. It was why she had been anxious to get away from baby-faced Jeremy that morning. Her Gramps would not eat breakfast without her there to share it with him.

With pancake batter on their faces from 'accidentally' turning the mixer up to the highest setting and syrup dripping from the sides over their overloaded plates they sat speaking jovially about history, something Gramps was entirely enraptured by. Their shared fondness of history was something that had brought them together when Della had first lost her mother. She had felt so alone and detached, until Gramps had sparked her interest when he rambled off about the French and Indian war, which had instantly piqued her interest. For years they spent their morning discussing anything at all that had historical merit. Gramps had been the reason Della had decided to

major in History.

Today, she spoke about ancient Italy and the Roman Empire, because the paper she had yet to write for her Ancient Civ class was due Monday. Then Louis decided to bring up Della's future.

"I hope that one day you can find what you're looking for. I have the highest of hopes for you, sweet pea." Gramps smiled at his only granddaughter.

"I want to travel," She confessed, knowing that her Gramps was completely against it but she had to get it out there that this was what she wanted to do, she didn't want to stay in one place stagnating like most people. Complacency was not in her nature.

Gramps' lips twitched up in a small, sad smile, "You're as stubborn as your mother was, you know that? Free-spirited and determined to do what you feel is right for you. You're a nomad by nature, I think," He shook his head with an exasperated expression gracing his features, "You know, I admire the tenacity. I've always been proud of the woman Lyn became during her travels. Not to say she wasn't wonderful before she'd left but she really came into herself during those years the two of you were out gallivanting the country."

"Mom always talked about you and Grams, you know? She loved you, even though we weren't around," Della stated before taking another bite of waffle and grinning at Louis from across the table. "She told me every time she called you asked her to come home and she flat out refused. She really was adamant that we stay gone, but I think she regretted not visiting a couple times a year."

"I sometimes wished Lyn would find a good job, a good man, and settle down with you somewhere to give you both some stability. When you two came back after Lyn had been diagnosed with Lupus I could see how miserable you both were to be stuck here. I know Lyn had far more planned for the two of you. She was thinking about selling the trailer and using the money to move you two to Europe after you graduated. She had it in her head that you two would travel the world together." Gramps smiled almost forlornly as he dipped another bite of his own waffle into the syrup that had coagulated on his plate. "I think that you'll just have to do that for you both. Maybe one day you'll find love- someone that will follow you in your travels. A like-minded man, just be sure he's a good one."

Della, not having it in her heart to scoff at the idea, smiled kindly, "Gramps, men aren't good. They're vultures and parasites, love is just a notion that children believe in. It's an illusion of happiness based on ancient ideals."

Louis laughed, deep and hearty, "I'll tell ya, you are just like Lyn's clone. You may not look much like she did but the way you think, your words, and your actions make you just the spitting image of the woman," He grinned at his granddaughter, "One day, your opinion will change."

"Care to make a wager on that one, Gramps?" Delphia grinned slyly, "Winner buys the loser a drink?"

"You're on, sweat pea. You'll lose, though. Even if it takes another

twenty years, you will lose," He winked at her, getting up and gathering some of the dishes.

"That's what you think!" Della exclaimed, grabbing the rest of the dishes and meeting him at the sink.

It was one of the better meals they'd had together in the last few months, and it meant so much to both of them that words could not express the feeling of happiness and elation that had surged through that kitchen in the hour they'd spent.

It was almost fitting, that this meal would be their last together. Once the dishes were done and Della was beginning to make her way up the stairs to her room to work on her essay, Louis Payne had collapsed in a heap on the living room floor, shattering his '# 1 Grandpa' coffee mug as he fought a losing battle in order to breathe.

* * *

><p>Author's Message

Yeah, so, I'm not scared to kill people in my stories. I'm writing about vampires, the human eater ones ¯" people are gonna die. I'm only a little sorry I killed Della's grandpa.

Typically, updates will come on Wednesday or Thursday. Since tomorrow is my birthday I decided I'd get this out a day in advance.

Anyways, a big hug and virtual cookies go out to the lovely people who favored, alerted, and reviewed this week ¯" you guys are fantastic! Also to my beta, _ MissVoltriKingsfan, _she diligently gets these chapters back to me so you're all one step closer to reading my sucky work, grammar problems effectively slain!

I do have a **favor to ask you all**, however. I've thrown a poll on my profile. Let's face it, Della will be a vampire. She might have a power, she might not, but I am torn between a few options and I would like your opinions so I can begin incorporating a bit of it into her human life. I will also have an option for no special ability, since I know that sometimes we just want normal little man eating vampire bitches walking around. I promise the abilities I can't decide between aren't to over-powered, like mind control or clairvoyance or some shit. So I'll have to poll up until probably next Monday. If you guys could just clicky my name and pick one that you like, that would help me out a bunch!

Since it's illegal to eat children nowadays, I've become forced to eat reviews and favorites for breakfast. Nom Nom Nom.

Don't forget to **Feed the Beast.**

3. Chapter Two

**True Mate Saga Book One: **Demetri

Chapter Two

_It was a special kind of torture, to know that the most delectable

blood one would ever taste would be that of the one you were meant to spend the rest of your immortal life._

It had been less than a month since Aro had granted Demetri permission to take a vacation from his duties when the tracker finally descended from the plane that had taken him from the airport in NYC to Detroit Metro. Whenever a member of the guard left for an extended period of time for personal reasons instead of Volturi business there were always preparations to be made. In this instance, a replacement tracker was commissioned for the time being and Demetri was required to bring the vampire, Tobias, up to the Volturi's standards. When Demetri had left the replacement, Tobias, had looked quite smug with himself.

No doubt the young fool thought he could prove himself and make the position permanent.

The only way the Volturi would replace Demetri would be if they discovered a vampire with a gift that was upgraded from his own. Someone who could track anyone in the world anywhere without having met them, or someone who had met them, first. Since in the past one thousand years no one has had such an elevated form of the tracker gift, Demetri was almost guaranteed his position would be waiting for him when he returned with his mate.

It was mid-evening and the sun had recently descended from the sky when Demetri exited the airport. He was anxious and almost buzzing with nervous energy that wasn't visible as he contemplated, not for the first time, what his mate would be like. He almost felt human with the amount of emotion that had filled him over the past few weeks of his immortal existence. It was reminiscent of how he had felt when he'd been asked to join the Volturi, but over a thousand times better. At times throughout his days the thought of finally coming face to face with the woman he was meant to spend eternity with planted a smile on his usually stoic features. He prayed to whatever deity truly existed that she didn't reject him.

He was easily reminded of a time long past, when he was married for the better part of a century to a vampire from the Egyptian coven that had been turned after he left. She found her mate during a brief trip to Sweden in the early 1600s and had refused to leave her mate's side. The male, although apologetic towards Demetri, was instantly inseparable from Cassiopeia as well. Demetri had seen the mating bond at work, and he had faith in it regardless of how it had operated against him in the past. The probability of one mate rejecting the other was relatively low, but the fact that mates have a choice whether they want to be with each other hadn't escaped Demetri's musings for a moment.

He wondered briefly if he would wish to pursue a relationship with his mate once he'd met her or if he'd be the one to reject the union. It was nearly impossible if one was a vampire, for the vampire would feel the emotions and the pull far stronger than any human would. Every sense would be quickly attuned to their own mate, the mate's needs instantaneously coming before one's own. It was easy to be caught up in the mating bond, and many had succumbed to it. Which, of course, was not a bad thing. Though sometimes it leads to drastic results. Edward and Bella Cullen, for example. Bella wished for a certain human experience before becoming a vampire, Edward had no choice but to oblige her this decision, a month later they have an

immortal half-breed and a few months after that the threat of the Volturi lingering on their doorstep.

Demetri's future was littered with the unknown since the day that Aurora had sensed his mate. Of only one thing he was completely certain, the protective instinct that a vampire held for their mate had already formed, and he would be damned if anyone touched or harmed what was meant to be his.

He sincerely hoped that his Delphia didn't have what the humans today called a boyfriend, for that unfortunate male would mysteriously disappear quite soon. Growling at the thought, Demetri flited from his spot in the shadows passed the blinding lights of the Airport and towards the hotel he'd arranged for himself, the Westin.

For centuries Demetri had hoped he would eventually find his mate, as most vampire do. With the ability to live immortally comes an almost overbearing sense of loneliness and melancholy that had hit Demetri harder with every passing decade that he hadn't found her. This incessant need was quenched when he had passed some eight decades with Cassiopeia, but the minute she had found her own mate they had resumed with an almost crippling force. As the human children would say now, he felt as though he would be #forever-alone.

For some time, he'd thought his mate passed from this life as a human, and had never stood a chance of meeting him in all his travels with the Volturi. He had also wondered for longer than he cared to admit if his true mate had been a woman from his village in the time he was human, and if by Amun turning him into a vampire he had successfully cheated final death, but also been cheated out of his own happiness.

Unfortunately, one does not have the time to dwell on the supposed woes of immortal life when they worked for the Volturi. It had been rather easy for him to throw himself into his work, and for a few centuries he'd lived to serve only himself and the Volturi. From the Mid 1600s until the early 1900s Demetri had been lost in a sea of missions, blood lust, and plain and pure unadulterated desire. Not only did he feed more often than he thought was possible today, but he also had buried himself and his teeth into any human woman he could, and that was saying something.

With the new discoveries of sexually transmitted diseases, he was rather disgusted with himself and thankful for his immortality and immunity to such things.

Felix called those his dark years. It was in this time that Demetri had founded his morbid sense of humor. He was, quite literally, the stuff vampire horror movies were made of.

In the early 1900s, Demetri had no longer found solace buried in a woman and in the over consumption of blood. It was as if a switch had been flipped in his mind that caused him to reevaluate his behavior. Suddenly he was no longer spending his off time lurking the cities surrounding Volterra, but instead withdrew into his room. He rarely joined the guard for anything but scheduled duty or when assigned on a mission. His face remained impassive when comments were made about his disappearances into his quarters, some were even worried.

Despite many vampire's assumptions that the Volturi were a band of volatile and self-obsessed bullies, Demetri knew them to be far more. Yes, those qualifications were in agreeance with the portrayal of their coven for many centuries, but they held a more important role than they were routinely given credit for. The coven, although powerful and the practical police force and at times, judge, jury, and executioner of their world, may have been an exclusive club for only the most talented and gifted of vampires but they were good to each other. The kings seemed to care about the happiness of the guard, and the guard would light themselves ablaze if it meant they could protect the kings. It may not be a conventional coven/familial relationship like the Cullen's, but the Volturi did things in their own fashion.

It was for this reason that Demetri gathered Aro had allowed him time to himself to meet and court his mate. Aro was a great many things. Some ruthless, little virtuous, but mostly vile. The leader of the Volturi always had alternative reason and motive for the decisions he made. Aro was not black and white, nor was he easily perceived as such. Aro was several shades of gray, but his one motivator was protection of himself and his position in the Vampire world. Therefore, he needed to keep and appease his gifted members, for if Jane and Alec especially were to turn on him and the rest of the Coven, the Volturi would cease to exist as the vampire world knew it.

The Volturi held the power, but without their guard they were vulnerable. Not that a single member of the guard would ever spark a revolution against the Kings. Especially not Alec and Jane, the witch twins with the most devastating vampiric power on the earth. They viewed Aro as the paternal figure they never had, and their loyalties to the Volturi resided only on their deep adoration for their maker and master. No, the only vampires who would, and have done such a thing would be the Romanians, and as there were only two in the coven, the Volturi hadn't viewed them as a threat.

Demetri shook himself from his musings. Nevertheless, he was overjoyed he now had the opportunity that Aro had granted him, and thanked Aurora for her gift. He would have to remember to buy the new Volturi member something nice for her aid, and to thank Aro for his gracious offering of respite.

Demetri hadn't been through this region in decades, the closest covens to this area where the one lead by Francis in Quebec and the one lead by Michael, the man who had sired Aurora, in New York. Although he hadn't been in this city, his memory was sharp as any vampires' would be, he flitted through the vaguely familiar streets on his way to the hotel. General Motors towers where the same as they had been after they were built, four of them surrounding a cylinder shaped one in the middle, he wondered how humans, who were notoriously lazy, had yet to build bridges from one building to the other as a means to escape having to walk out of their way. He chuckled at the thought and continued on wards, the smell of Lake Erie assaulting his sharp senses.

He was almost to the Westin when he heard the sounds of a failing heartbeat underneath a bridge a few blocks from where he had been running. The smell of freshly spilled blood invaded his nostrils. That should not go to waste, he thought and he swiftly turned direction. Demetri had wished to wait until he'd already checked into

his room to hunt but one did not wait when the opportunity presented itself.

The human was male, possibly in his late forties and quite clearly homeless. He was in the middle of bleeding to death from a stab wound that couldn't have been more than a few minutes old. Demetri, sensing no other heartbeats, revealed himself from the shadows. Being a predatory species, he didn't usually prefer his meals to be served up on a platter, gift wrapped if you will, but since this one was already dying he figured he would end the man's suffering and fill himself while he was feeling benevolent.

The man noticed Demetri almost right away, "Wh-what are you?" He asked, body trembling and pale with his lost blood and fear for the inevitable. The man thought he was hallucinating as he saw the pale, tall, and red eyed figure step out from the shadows, cloaked like something out of a horror movie.

Demetri offered a lopsided grin, "I am Death."

The man nodded, a smile gracing his scuffed features as he quickly came to terms with his fate, odd, for a human. Demetri supposed it was because the man knew he was going to die that his final words were; "Finally," as he whispered so low that no human ever could have heard it. It was abundantly clear to Demetri that this man had been waiting for his death for some while. Instead of wasting more time for the human, he moved silently so that he was standing behind the man as he sunk his overly sharpened teeth into the man's throat, pulling every ounce of remaining blood from the man's system before taking a chunk of flesh from his neck and tossing him into the river for good measure, that way when the body was discovered it would be a given that all of the fluids would have exited his body.

Demetri, having been satisfied by the man and needing no further sustenance, flitted to his hotel and checked in with the reception desk. He was reminded, not for the first time, of his age as a memory of a time when the hostesses or receptionists would escort you to your accommodations and bend to your needs. It was a small tradeoff for the television and the plumbing, he was sure. It seemed to him that the more advanced and 'intellectual' the humans became the less mannered and respectful they were. Humans, Demetri thought almost spitefully.

Once in his suite he quickly found the remote to check in to how the weather would be the following day. His plan to find Delphia would have to be adjusted based on whether the sun would be making an appearance or not. While he flipped through the channels nonchalantly his phone buzzed. The thing about being a Vampire and having sensitive hearing made it so that silence was a difficult luxury to come by, and so incessant and loud ring-tones were something the majority of them did not bother with, but a silent phone call would go unnoticed, so vibrate was the primary tendency.

Without checking to see who it was, he answered. "Demetri."

"You are on vacation, and yet you sound as though you're on official Volturi business," Felix's voice filtered through the receiver.

Demetri rolled his eyes at his long-time friend and companion, "I am

gone not twenty-four hours and already you must torture me with your voice. What is it?"

"Our lovely new member, Aurora, asked for me to contact you. If you would be so kind as to can the sass, I would convey the message," Felix teased.

Landing on the weather channel, Demetri ignored Felix's jibe and responded, "Yes?"

"She says that she captured a glimpse of Delphia while practicing with her gift a few hours ago. She believes she can only see the mates in the exact moment as something important is happening, since Aro had seen everything that she sees he has also concluded that the memories that are granted her when she first sees the mate are only important moments in their lives."

"And what, pray tell, did Aurora see?" Demetri's interest was piqued at the thought of something important having happened in his mate's life while he was so close to her, and yet he missed it entirely.

Human life was of no importance to Felix, so his next words came out a bit uninterested, "Evidently Delphia's grandfather may have had an internal attack and passed away in their living room." He'd stated it as if he had simply informed Demetri of the weather they were to have in Italy that day. "Aurora seemed to think you should know. I argued that you would not care but she seemed adamant that I inform you. Enjoy your vacation, don't take a bite out of her too early."

Once Felix had hung up the phone Demetri sat and pondered. It was true, two months ago he wouldn't have cared if someone's grandfather had passed away. To tell the ugly truth, he didn't care now that his mate's grandfather had died, what he did care about was how his mate was taking it. Humans were, understandably, more sensitive to this sort of thing. Well, if he were being honest with himself, vampires who lost a loved one went absolutely ballistic on a good day. Therefore, a human's reaction was probably expected and far tamer than that of a vampire.

Briefly, Demetri wondered if he should find out which hospital she was in and flit over to check on her, if only to catch a glimpse. This surely thwarted his plans to court her right away. He would have to wait a couple of weeks for her to grieve, as humans needed time before they were able to cope with the death of a loved one.

Not only would he now more than before have to wait to court her, but he would have to wait to turn her as well. An emotionally damaged human made for an incorrigible newborn. Not even his good standing with the Volturi would be able to save his mate if she were to expose them to the world, if of course she were to be that kind of newborn. Not in this technological day and age, anyways.

He decided the best course of action for him to take would be to seek her out, if only to check in on her well-being and glimpse her for himself. In the age of technology, it had been fairly easy to pinpoint an exact address for a one Delphia Payne, whose middle name turned out to be Clio which amused Demetri greatly because of her name and his own Greek origins, with the hints that Aurora had given. Honestly, it was as though humans didn't have names like Delphia.

anymore. The thought saddened Demetri as he realized beautiful names like his mate's and many other vampires he had come into contact with over the years had unique names that, during their prime, were quite popular. Mortals seemed to waste their children' names on the generics like Sara, or Ben.

Demetri reached into the only bag he had brought with him. Luggage was unnecessary when you had far too much money. He would purchase anything extra that he needed when the time came, he had mused. In a flash he had pulled out some clothes that would better suit for the winter environment of Michigan in January and placed colored contacts over his now cherry red eyes.

Since he had yet to meet his mate and therefore couldn't decipher her whereabouts using his tracking sense he strummed at the strings in his mind that connected his to two members of the Volturi, Chelsea and Afton. Although his rank was far above Afton's, who's own rank was literally non-existent, he knew even if the two were together Afton would have no choice but to answer the call. It was simply a courtesy, but it was not without Demetri's own ulterior motive. It had been several decades now that Chelsea and Afton had been spending less and less time with one another, a situation that only Demetri seemed to have noticed which was saying something for he rarely ventured from his own quarters. Still, it was easier for him, given that he could easily decipher anyone's whereabouts in a mere moment.

Determining that Afton was alone after shuffling through the whereabouts of his entire coven, Demetri plucked his cell phone that laid abandoned on the coffee table near the television and dialed a number he knew well. It was answered on the second ring.

"Afton," The light tone of Chelsea's mate came through the receiver.

"I need your tech savvy," Demetri stated simply.

Afton was the Volturi's number one connection to the world of modern technology. He had been self-taught in the art of anything computerized. From programming to hacking, Netflix to online games Afton was who you wanted to ask for assistance.

"What do you need?" He asked calmly, Demetri could hear Afton sit in his computer chair and click the mouse a couple of times to toggle the screen saver.

"I need to you look into the hospitals here in Detroit and see if anyone with the surname of Payne has been admitted to a morgue or otherwise. P. A. Y. N.E."

The line was silent for a while save for the light clicking of Afton's fingers over the keyboard while he typed in all of the coding and information that was needed. Demetri had no idea what Afton was doing, only that the vampire himself knew what to do and therefore Demetri had trust in his friend's abilities. Although Afton was not a member of the guard he had proven himself to be quite resourceful, especially in recent years. The truth was that although the humans advanced the Volturi remained the same, completely immersed in the old ways of the world. While the vast majority of the guard agreed with their Kings decision to remain as they were, it was Afton who

had appealed to the Kings interests when informing them of the reason they should all become at some level accustomed to technology, he did not foresee it vanishing from the humans interests any time soon.

It had been at Afton's insistence that most of the Volturi guard was forced to learn the basics of modern technology.

"A Louis Payne was admitted to the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit a few hours ago. Based on what I have pulled up here it looks like he is still alive now, however they don't expect him to make it."

"Does it say what he suffered from?" Demetri asked, genuinely curious.

"It does say that he's had a heart attack," Afton was quick to answer.

Demetri, processing the information, quickly asked, "And does it state what room number he would be in?"

"423 on level six."

"Thank you, Afton," Demetri stated as he hung up the phone.

It didn't take long for Demetri to flit to the Henry Ford Hospital. As determined as he was to see his mate, he let nothing distract him as he raced through the city. Before even three minutes had passed by Demetri was in the door and through the hallways in a blur of motion that not a single human had seen, and even the security cameras would have to slow to make out even the shape of a man. Now in close proximity the scent of his mate had infiltrated and tantalized his senses the second he had entered through the doors of the hospital. Her being so close to him had his entire body alight with a need so strong that he'd had to refrain from letting out an animalistic growl in anticipation of finally catching a glimpse.

Once he'd located the exact position of the room he held his breath and sped out of the building faster than a human eye could see, not having been prepared for just how alluring the scent of his mate would be.

Once outside he was able to catch himself again. The room was on the backside of the building, and therefore he was less likely to be spotted if he scaled the walls and perched himself outside the window, especially because it was night. He could easily break the glass if he wasn't careful with controlling his emotions. He briefly wondered if this was how Edward Cullen felt when he'd gotten a whiff of his singer and mate, Bella. It was a special kind of torture, to know that the most delectable blood one would ever taste would be that of the one you were meant to spend the rest of your immortal life with, but more so for those who deny their nature as the Cullen's do. In their case the need to feed from their singer, as mates had been miss-termed, would be cause for a more difficult time. He wondered how younger, relatively inexperienced vampires had done so in the past.

It was always easier for those vampires who's mates had already been turned before they met.

Scaling the wall Demetri followed the scent of his mate. The closer

he grew the more tantalizing it was. When he was finally standing on the ledge outside of the window he finally was able to lay eyes on his mate.

The world nearly stopped for Demetri as he felt his gift shoot out and wrap tightly and as gently as he could make it around the link he now held for hers. Now I've got you. He thought as he tested the bond of his gift and strummed the cord between their minds, he was now able to determine her location. His chest felt a distinct pulling sensation that, had he not already known this woman to be his mate, would have clued him in to her importance right away. He found himself consciously willing his body to stay where it was and not to break the fragile glass window, snatch the woman, and never let her from his grasp again.

She was a tiny thing, a mere five foot if he estimated correctly. Her glorious orange flecked red mane was cut in the middle of her back, just beneath her shoulder blades. He could not see her face, her back was turned to him, but already she took his breath away. Her pale, small hand grasped the older man's on the bed. The only movement that came from her was of her lungs gently inhaling and exhaling.

Suddenly, Demetri was worried. Most humans would have moved more than that by now. He listened for the beating of her heart and realized that it was there, strong and steady. She sounded normal.

A woman, almost as tall as Demetri himself, threw open the hospital room door and glared down at Delphia. Demetri fought the urge to growl in warning but reminded himself that he was currently standing on the edge of a window and hadn't even met his mate yet. Furthermore, his mate had no idea vampires existed, so therefore it was rather imperative that he maintain his silence.

He watched as the woman unceremoniously dropped her overly large purse on the man's bedside table a small item spilling out and actually smacking against the man's chest, eyes never once leaving his Delphia's face. This woman's anger was visible, but it was her words that cause Demetri to wish the woman dead where she stood. He quickly began plotting the ways to torture and drain this wench as he quickly shot his mental link around the tenors in this woman's own mind, barreling it through her flimsy human mental barriers and imbedding itself into its new domain. Unlike with his Delphia, Demetri had aggressively pushed his link into this woman's unsuspecting mind she would be feeling quite the migraine soon, and for that he couldn't bring himself to give a damn.

"This is your fault," The woman hissed accusingly, "I fucking knew this would happen. I told you he couldn't have any more of that shit food you two eat!"

Delphia said nothing. Demetri wished dearly that he could enter the room and defend his mate, his entire body was screaming with his instinct to protect the frail human in front of him.

"You're so damn irresponsible, Della, you're sitting there all sad faced but do you even really care? My dad is dying on that bed right now because of you. Your entire existence was stressful on him; you know that? You and your mom took off for years, and then you come back and Evelyn dies, leaving dad stressed out and taking care of

you, her ungrateful bratty teenager."

Delphia was trembling, with anger or with sadness Demetri did not know, but his anger was escalading with every word that exited this woman's mouth. He wished to protect his mate, but wondered why she did not defend herself. Could she have possibly been the catalyst for her grandfather's death? Surely not. Not with the way she held the elderly humans' hand and sat like a statue, her face turned towards him as if willing him to life with her eyes.

"Do you have anything to say at all Della?" The woman growled out, her rough voice causing Demetri to wince as it grated against his sensitive ears.

Delphia's head moved slightly so she was facing the woman and Demetri was able to catch a glimpse of her face and his unnecessary breathing ceased instantaneously. Her face was heart shaped and yet rather angular, but held a certain soft feminine look. She had high cheekbones that accentuated a small nose and somewhat thin, but plump for their size, lips. A human could not see correctly from this distance, but everything was magnified to his heightened sight. Her face held only a few scars of pubescent acne, her pores miniscule. Her eyes were the most brilliant shade of deep sea blue he had ever seen and, instead of clashing with her vibrant orange-red hair, they actually complimented her. In short, Delphia was an exquisite beauty.

He refused to admit he might have been biased. Delphia was stunning.

When Delphia spoke, it was as if someone had granted warmth to flow through Demetri's long dead, cold body once again. Her voice was like music, light, laughter, and everything he had ever enjoyed wrapped into a bundle of red haired splendor. Her words had not mattered, but he found himself captivated by the way she defended herself, as if she wasn't afraid of the woman who was twice her own size, "Mary, go snort some coke and get your fix. I did nothing to cause this, Gramps' only stress in life is bailing your sorry ass out of jail twice a year."

Demetri would have laughed if he wasn't afraid that the woman would lunge at his mate. When the woman instead snarled and snatched up her purse, he was able to smile at his mate's words.

Seemed like his Delphia was quite the firecracker.

* * *

><p>Author's Message

So uh, yeah. This chapter may have been a bit more boring than the last. I'm conveying the sharp contrast between Della and Demetri. I'm also going to be sticking with the whole "Your singer is actually your mate" thing. Which I hadn't planned on doing in the first place but this will accentuate the fact that the Cullen's, being veg heads, are less in control than they believe. They may show up at some point in the series, I'm not sure.

Thank you for the birthday wishes, reviews, and favorites. You guys rock my world in ways my husband only dreams of doing.

Oh snap, I went there.

Edited: 4/26/16

After the shortage of serial killers on the streets due to vampiric sensibilities, I haven't feed in days. I grow cranky each passing moment I have no sustenance. So please, don't forget to:

****Feed the Beast****

4. Chapter Three

****True Mate Saga Book One: **Demetri**

****Chapter Three****

Delphia could have sworn she saw a smile flicker across Louis' face._

There comes a time in everyone's life where Death is knocking on the back door asking to come inside. By asking, he gives the illusion that it's your choice whether you live or die. He allows you to grasp foolishly at the slippery remnants of your life while he picks your lock and grins wickedly. He opens the door slowly, almost teasingly, then snatches your breath from you and carts your soul to its eternal resting place, wherever that may be.

In short, Death is an asshole.

Louis Payne lay in the hospital bed, being kept alive only by the unyielding will of technology. There was little to no chance of recovery for him. Mary had made the decision as his power of attorney to pull the plug that night after their Pastor came to pray for his journey to 'his final resting place.' Della had rarely moved from her spot next to him since the hospital staff had wheeled him into this room. She held his slightly wrinkled older hand in her bony and pale one for hours, almost completely still. Mary had come in and yelled at her, accusing her of neglecting Louis and being the cause of all this stress in his life.

After saying a few choice words to Mary, Della had gone back to her previous position. It was almost as though Della had become as unresponsive as Louis. She simply stared at the gentle rise and fall of his chest, too afraid to look upon his resting face. From the moment the emergency room doctor had informed her of the fate of her Gramps her mind had raced as she thought of all the times they'd gone against the doctor's orders. Sugar, caffeine, fatty foods. Far too much pizza and McDonald's, not enough green beans and broccoli. She was filled with an unreasonable urge to feel responsible for Louis' impending death.

If she was being honest with herself, Gramps was already dead.

Heart attack. They said. It's quite common in older persons, sometimes they recover, sometimes they don't. Louis was one of the ones who wouldn't.

Della was vaguely aware of her aunt's presence in the hospital room once again, twelve hours after the last time she had been there. She chose not to acknowledge it, however, because the last time they spoke Mary hadn't left on good terms. Now that they were all each other would have in the world (besides various cousins and what not-the pretentious anal retentive douche bags that they were) Della wasn't sure she wanted a relationship with her aunt passed her grandfather's funeral.

"We need to talk," Mary stated, her tough as nails voice, rough from twenty or so years of smoking and several octaves lower than most females', called out and grasped Della's attention.

Slowly, as if to hold off the inevitable in a brief fit of rebellion, Della raised her head and met her aunts cold stare with blank eyes. She was forced to acknowledge the woman, but there was no law that said she had to like it, or that she had to be civil about it.

"I know you're fuckin' twenty-one, lazy, and just about as worthless as your mom was but you're gonna have to pull your head out of your ass for about thirty seconds while I explain something to you," Mary hissed venomously.

Della saw red. Everything was fine when Mary was talking trash about her several hours prior. It was even acceptable when Mary made the decision to pull Gramps off the life support because he wouldn't be able to regain proper functions and live without the tube even if they'd kept him on it. Prolonging his life unnaturally wouldn't be something Gramps wanted, anyways. She could understand all of that, she wasn't exactly winning any awards as best granddaughter in the world, she could admit. Her mom, however, was a subject that when brought up was meant to be done so with respect. If Mary couldn't do that, then Mary was in for a rude awakening. Della was still seething dangerously, slowly standing from her seated position for the first time since she had gone to the bathroom three hours prior, while Mary had continued talking and facing away.

"-and you're not going to be able to stay. You can have a few weeks to figure things out for yourself but you **will** be leaving.
Also-

Mary didn't get to finish her statement. She was interrupted by a deep, slow, and loud intake of breath. Mary chanced a glance at her niece to see that Della had, at some point in her tirade, stood and looked to be absolutely livid. Della's face was tinted a startling red, her stance defensive, she looked about ready to lunge. Mary raised an overly plucked eyebrow at Della and turned to face her full on.

Mary was by no means a defenseless woman. At six foot and two hundred pounds she could easily take a lot of the other women at the jail when she'd be carted off there. ('I didn't do it- my lawyer fucked me over!' She'd say.) Mary Payne never had a problem fighting anyone, and she wouldn't start today. To say she was confident that she could take her hardly five foot, less than 115-pound niece was a bit of an understatement.

Mary was sure if she flicked the girl then Della would be in agony on the ground.

"You wanna go, little girl?" she hissed, glaring warningly at her niece.

"Not particularly, Mary. I'd like to make one thing very clear." Della began, making sure to step around the hospital bed so that the area around her would be more ideal if fists were to fly. "Don't you ever insult my mom in my presence again."

Scoffing, Mary threw her hands to her hips, "She was my sister, I'll say what I damn well please. She was a worthless whor—" again, Mary was not able to finish her sentence. The back of her head hit the floor, causing her to become disoriented and dizzy, blood pooling in her mouth as a rotted tooth loosened dangerously, before she knew what was going on.

"One more fucking word about my Mom, Mary, one more. Go ahead. You can talk shit about me until you're blue in the face, but keep her out of it. This is an inappropriate conversation to be having right now anyways, am I right? Or am I wrong here, do you not want to put your own selfish fucking agenda before your dying father? I mean, shit, you couldn't even wait until after the funeral to come up in here talking down to me and evicting me from my home," Della spat, her red hair fanned out around her, some of it falling forward and brushing the floor where she crouched.

With Della's knee being placed on Mary's chest, and her hands on Mary's shoulders there was really no room for the older woman to gain some ground and turn this position around. Defeated, Mary made a noise of assent that was closer to a growl and a moan, but it was enough for Della to back off and feel confident that her aunt would keep her comments to herself.

The second Della stood, Mary had flailed her arms from her position on the floor and knocked the girl to the ground. Mary then mounted her niece, punching her once in a move that was sloppy and not centered. The fist that had been aimed for Della's nose hit the girl in the jaw. Della gasped in pain, pulling her leg up and kicking Mary as hard as she could in the lower stomach. Seven years of martial arts training had Delphia's mind whirling as she quickly got to her feet and found her center while Mary was still struggling to turn from her back to her belly in order to push herself up.

"I suggest that you run along and get another fix or whatever it is you need to be easier to deal with, I don't give a shit, just fuck off," Della stated as she briefly glanced in the mirror nearby at her red and already swollen jaw. She resumed her position beside her Gramps, eyes still trained on her aunt while Mary righted herself and glared at her niece, once again angry and seething, now sore and bleeding to boot. Mary made to move towards her niece again and Della held up a single finger, "Mary, if you get caught fighting in a hospital you're going to prison. No one will be willing to bail you out this time."

Growling in frustration, "You fucking attacked me!" Mary hissed, taking a step back. She quieted for a moment, as if allowing the information to sink in before continuing, "They're pulling the plug on Dad in another couple hours, and the family will be here soon. Like I said before, the house was left to me in the will, and I need it, so legally you've got about days sixty days to vacate. I. Want. You. Out. And you better watch your back, I've got friends in low

places itching to use a pretty face like yours," Mary spat threateningly and, in a bout of mayhem, kicked over a stand that went to the vacant bed in the room as she made her way to the door.

Delphia flicked her aunt off and called her a coward when the woman turned back around with her mouth open like she wanted to say something else. Once Mary had finally left Della went back to holding Louis' hand and bent down so she was close to his ear.

"Don't worry Gramps, Mary's just being a bitch because she's withdrawing off whatever she's on right now. At least she's not being violent. This is the second time we've gotten into it in twenty-four hours and she's yet to try and hit me. Everything will be fine for me, so you can just move on and not worry about a thing. Play some cards up in heaven with Grams or some shit. Mom said Grams and you were always playing cards." She whispered positively, ignoring the pain that surged from her jaw.

Although her world seemed like it was crashing down like a building during an earthquake around her, Della couldn't help but think that her being thrown out of her house might be a blessing in disguise. Of course, she would have rather left on her own terms and not because her Gramps had passed on and her aunt had evicted her. She did realize, however, that she wouldn't have any more commitments, she could be free of restraints to go back on the road. The options were limitless, though she felt sick at the thought of Mary moving into Gramps' house and trashing the place. It would probably be the catalyst to the end of the quiet neighborhood. Mary would start the drug trafficking in the quiet little suburb; the rest of the neighbors were elderly so they would probably be forced into apartments or retirement homes.

Life sometimes was a bitter, cruel joke. You live fifty years in the same house that you slaved to pay off and then only ten years into your retirement, actually enjoying your freedom, you have to sell because you can't keep up with the demands of your home anymore. Your kids are little shits who, at forty years old, no longer care about your welfare so long as they get theirs so even if you moved in with them you'd quickly move out because of their selfish tendencies and their attitude towards you for imposing on their lives. Della prayed for the fates of Louis' neighbors, who didn't deserve that sort of final couple decades of their lives.

Ah, humanity, how it confounds us all.

"You know what I'm going to do, don't you?" she questioned Louis, smoothing back his grey and white hair with a small smile on her face. "I'll be sure to drop by whenever I'm in the region."

Delphia could have sworn she saw a smile flicker across Louis' face.

In the end, Louis Payne had passed peacefully within minutes of being off life support. At the request of Mary, all machines were unhooked so they wouldn't have to hear as his heart slowly quit beating and flat lined. At exactly 3:46 PM on January 9th, 2015, Louis Payne slipped from the world in a room full of his closest friends and his last remaining relatives.

The funeral had been a large affair. Louis had many friends and acquaintances with whom he had shared his life. The large church they'd attended had not a single empty seat in the pews. The service had been beautiful, and two members of the church had risen to each give a eulogy. By the end of the service it was only family who went to the burial site, while everyone else met up at the reception hall to commence the dinner so the family wouldn't have to. Mary had carried on, whimpering in sadness at the loss of her father. Most of the family knew she wasn't truly as upset as she seemed. No one questioned her motives in pulling Louis off his life support, since there was barely a one percent chance of resuscitation.

The will had been read after the reception. Mary smirking smugly at Della when it was read that she was, in fact, to inherit the house after all legal matters were taken care of. As the list went on, however, Mary's smirk quickly vanished and was replaced with a scowl of contempt. Della was set to have first dibs on any possessions on the property that she wanted, followed directly by any family member aside from Mary, whom Louis believed in receiving the house made it unnecessary for her to have all the possessions inside of it. Louis had also said that all of his financial assets and everything in his accounts were to go to Della, the only request he made was that Della take the Mustang and travel the country with it and his monetary contribution, saying it was about time it got some miles under its ancient hood.

It was the night after the reception that found Della sitting in a more quite bar on a side of town that didn't much cater to party goers. Usually she avoided this type of place, but this bar in particular had a sort of sentimental value. Louis had taken her to this bar the night she had turned twenty-one and treated her to her first, well, first legal shot of bourbon.

She sat at the bar, her red hair pulled up into a rubber band because she couldn't find a hair tie anywhere. "Two doubles of Jim Bean, please."

The man, in his early thirties, winked at her flirtatiously, "You got it."

The shots were placed down in front of her just minutes later and she quickly moved one to her right, where her Gramps had sat all those months ago. It had been a quiet night, and Louis had gotten her completely plastered in hopes that she would forever stay away from the stuff after that. His attempt was in vain, however, because she had already been drinking for some time and the bill at the end of the night was enough to have taken a week's worth of her own tips. Her hangover hadn't even been so bad the next day, because she'd taken three aspirin and drank a liter of water before passing out.

Needless to say, Louis hadn't taken her out to drink again.

"Excuse me, is this seat taken?" An elegant accented voice came from her right where she had placed the shot, interrupting her thoughts.

Della didn't even turn around, "Yeah, it is, but the one to my left isn't."

She felt the stranger move behind her and saw him sit to her left out of the corner of her eye. She plucked her double shot off the table and knocked it back, signaling to the bartender that she was ready for another, but asked for a single instead. The strangers alluring voice again interrupted her silence, "I'll take a single Patron, please."

Della wasn't in the mood for male shenanigans tonight, but she couldn't help but notice the deep and eloquent voice of the stranger who had sat next to her. His accent made him sound European. She wasn't sure what nationality but from her glimpse of the almost chalky, yet still olive tone of his hand he might be from the southern parts of Europe. Either way, his accent paired with the sound of his baritone was enough to send a shiver through her.

"May I ask your name?" He asked, and since she figured she wasn't going to be getting rid of him for a while, she figured she might as well talk to him. She didn't really want to come here to think about times passed, but she had wanted a moment of silence to remember her Gramps.

She looked over to the stranger and was instantly captivated by how svelte he looked. He was almost inhumanly beautiful. His face was angular, complete with a pointed, refined nose and a strong jawline. He looked almost like one would expect ancient nobility to have appeared. He held not a single trace of boyishness, his dark and deep set eyes were encased in thick eyelashes, giving the impression of danger with just the right mix of excitement. His lips weren't thin, but they weren't overly large. The man's brown hair was styled in a devil may care sort of way, attempting that I don't care what I look like but I did spend ten minutes making the hair look like I don't care style. His clothes screamed posh, as if he'd never wanted for anything. She was willing to bet he drove a sports car, but for some reason that didn't really put her off like it typically would have.

"You may ask, but that doesn't mean you'll receive an answer." She smiled triumphantly, as if she had pulled one over on him.

He grinned and her heart nearly stopped as his cheeks raised and eyes crinkled as they accommodated the gesture. He was beyond handsome. "I ask to be polite. You have your identification card on the table, Miss Payne."

Della could almost feel herself flush as she looked down where, indeed, the treacherous little card was sitting on the counter next to her car keys. She quickly stuffed the card into her pocket with an artificial scowl, muttering "traitor." She turned her head to look at the stranger once more, "It's not fair that you've practically stolen my name and I don't know yours."

The man looked mockingly affronted, "I did no such thing, Miss Payne."

The bartender returned with her drink and the strangers Patron, almost slamming the man's on the table. Della could have smiled at the clear insinuation, but let it go. It did not due to dwell on it. The bartender stood little chance, as did the stranger. She would be going home alone despite the clear panty-dropper who was sitting next to her.

"I say you owe me a name, cheers!" she said, raising her glass to meet his. They clanked glasses and she knocked hers back, paying no mind to him as she placed it back on the table.

When she looked at him he had a look of unease on his face, his glass was empty but still clutched in his hand. "This is repulsive; how can people drink this?" He questioned, quite possibly to himself.

His question caused Della to laugh, "Have you never had Patron before?"

The stranger shook his head, "I am afraid I do not spend my time at a tavern regularly, nor do I consume alcohol."

"Then what are you doing at a bar?" She giggled, feeling the effects of her drinks, without having to ask, the bartender gave her another single. She left this one to sit while she observed the man next to her, waiting for an answer.

He gave her a smoldering look and smiled alluringly, "I am trying something new."

Della snorted, "Well I'm sorry to be the one to inform you but your decision was shit. You can't just start out on something like Patron. You have to work your way up to the hard stuff. Get a craft beer or something fruity instead."

"I should order a beer?" He questioned, raising a sophisticated brow.

"No, you shouldn't. Not now anyways. You can't drink beer after liquor, you'll be sicker than a dog in an hour if you do." She responded, "To be honest you should probably get a mixed drink to start out with and work your way up to the hard stuff. It would help you out, have you ever tried anything you liked before?"

He grinned almost wickedly, like he was in on his own private joke that she wasn't privy to when he answered, "I've always quite liked Bloody Mary's."

Della shivered slightly at the way he'd said the word bloody; it was almost like a lover's caress. She dismissed it quickly and knocked her third drink back. The bartender was instantly there and she put her hand over her cup right before he took it, "A Bloody Mary for my friend and a White Russian for me, please."

The bartender nodded and turned around to begin mixing the drinks. He looked between the girl and the untouched double shot of bourbon to her right with a questioning glance as he worked. The man with clothing that costed more than the bartenders' mortgage was glaring threateningly at him but the bartender didn't mind. He was used to this guys' type. The sexual predator. In his time as a bartender he'd seen all kinds. The ones with money and smooth speech were the worst kind of men, they usually preyed on the woman who was drinking alone, and he wanted to monitor the situation. Luckily it was a slow night.

"So where about are you from, little lady?" The bartender asked Della, throwing her a smile as he worked on the drinks.

Instantly a little unreasonably angry at being called little, Della responded with a smile in place regardless, "Everywhere."

He nodded casually, "And you, sir?"

"Oh yeah, sure, he can be a sir, but I have to be little?" Della stated under her breath, causing the stranger to chuckle. She nearly jumped out of her skin, how and he heard that?

"I am visiting from Italy." He stated smoothly, but his eyes were glaring dangerously at the man who'd just set drinks in front of them.

"Italy? Hmm, that's nice." The bartender replied, completely disinterested.

Della however, had been enthralled the minute the country's name passed the stranger's lips. "Oh man- Italy? I've always wanted to go there. I just finished writing a paper on the Roman Empire for my ancient civilizations class."

The stranger flashed her a smile, "The Roman Empire has nothing on the Ancient Greeks. Yes, militarily they were more efficient, but the Greeks, they were a sight to behold, Miss. Payne." He spoke fondly, as if he knew what he was talking about, causing Della to smile at him in return and position herself so that she was now facing the man.

"I don't disagree with that. I would argue that Greek art and politics where better, but the Romans defiantly knocked everything out of the ball park when it comes to brute strength. Their republic was as scary as it was admirable, but the Athenian democracy, I believe, worked just as well if not better and although an outsider suspected tyranny of majority vote, such was not the case in the beginning. It's why during the founding of the American Constitution we became both a democracy and a republic."

Della spoke with the stranger for hours about the parallels between the Ancient Greeks and the Romans. Eventually the bartender had walked away, sensing that he was entirely too far out of his element. The stranger was well versed and knew what he was talking about, he had even informed Della of many facts that she hadn't known. At one point, the stranger had gotten up to use the facilities, and during that time Della had begun drinking water and pulled a few Advil out of her purse. Just as she had taken them the bartender had told her that if she feels uncomfortable driving home then he would call her a cab. She explained it would not be necessary and the stranger had returned.

The spoke some more, now debating over American history, which he also knew quite a bit about for being a foreigner, more than most American adults knew. She was actually quite impressed by his vast and beautiful oasis of knowledge. He was like a tall drink of ice cold water on a scorching desert day to her. Della found herself saddened and disappointed by the time last call was announced.

"Well, I guess I should be heading home. It's been wonderful talking to someone who is just as enthused by history as I am. It's rare,

even in my classes. It's like no one cares about what happened in the past anymore," She stated, moving to had her card to the bartender's outstretched hand.

"Allow me," the stranger pulled out a shiny piece of platinum colored plastic and placed it in the bartender's hand, "I have not had such an in depth discussion in years, the least I can do is treat you to your drinks."

"Are you sure?" Della asked, not one to turn down the man's kind offer, but she didn't want him to do it if he didn't actually want to, and she owed him no favors if he did, though after their conversation she didn't want to assume that was the reason he'd offered to pay.

He nodded and smiled kindly towards her, though his eyes flitted dangerously as he glimpsed the yellowing bruise across her jaw, his hand raising to touch it briefly. Della was surprised not so much by the cold feel of his hand on her face, but by the sort of numbing electric shock that surged through her. It wasn't until after the feeling faded that she thought of how cool his n was and how soothing it was against the bruise left there of her scuffle with her aunt Mary. "My mind has not stopped questioning since I laid eyes upon this contusion. Excuse me, it may be terribly rude of me to ask, but how did this happen, Miss Payne?" He asked gently, though is eyes seemed to flicker dangerously in the low bar lights.

Della shrugged, brushing off his dangerous expression as a sort of weird male protective instinct. Like that one country song where the girl is out for drinks because their boyfriend cheated on her and the country singer offers to 'bust his lip,' but really he just wanted to get laid. It didn't matter how alluring this stranger was, he wasn't getting laid. "Oh, just a scuffle with a family member. No big deal, I heal pretty fast."

The stranger's hand withdrew and a look of anger flashed across his face. When the bartender returned the man's card the stranger stood quickly, as if he were trying to flee. "It was delightful getting to know you tonight, Miss Payne. We will meet again."

He turned and began walking to the front of the bar while Della collected her things. As an afterthought, she quickly called after him despite his near cold dismissal. "Wait!" He turned and fixed her with a kind stare, though he looked almost anxious to get out of the room. "You owed me a name."

Something flickered in the stranger's eyes, and then a full blown smile erupted across his features as he let out a gentle laugh, "My name is Demetri, _diletto_."

"Miss?" The bartender interrupted as Della watched Demetri bowed his head slightly towards her and gracefully walked out the front door, he pointed to the double shot that had sat to the right of her the entire time completely untouched, "Do you want to drink this double?"

Della grinned, "Nope. That one is for my Gramps."

The bartender looked confused, "Was he supposed to be here? Do you need to call someone?"

"No," Della laughed her entire face erupting with mirth as she thought about how the conversation with the stranger had been entirely reminiscent of all of the conversations she'd ever had over the subject of history with her Gramps, "He sent an angel."

Regardless of this spectacular night she had spent speaking with the mysterious Demetri, it was the next morning that found Della sitting inside the Mustang loaded with a full tank of gas. There were two suitcases of clothes, a pair of tennis shoes, a pair of flip flops in the back seat. The money she had acquired through working and selling her Oldsmobile sat buried in the camping equipment that she had loaded in the trunk. In the front seat next to her sat a laptop and a dead cell phone. A picture of her mom and Gramps sat tucked into the plastic next to the odometer of the vehicle, she was ready to roll.

Although she was leaving Michigan, she couldn't shake the feeling that she had been destined to meet the stranger, Demetri, in that particular bar on that particular night. She felt as though there had been an instant connection with him, and it had been enough to force her to consider staying. When she woke the next morning, Della had decided her plan of action. She would leave, as intended.

If God or Fate intends something big with this Demetri, then he will be placed in my path again. She reasoned, she just couldn't stay. Relationships were fleeting anyways, and remaining in Detroit where she had no home would have just made her miserable. Besides, he would have to return to Italy eventually, even if they were to meet again while she remained in Michigan.

She didn't stop to say goodbye to anyone but Herman, who had graciously given her his number, a hundred dollars, and a hug with the invitation to call any time. She quickly hit I-75 and headed south to make due of the good weather until it was warm enough in the east to travel that way for a few months.

With the windows cracked in the car for air flow and the radio blaring, Della was free to roam for the first time in seven years.

* * *

><p>Author's Message

They met and she took off. BAHABA. I am so mean to Demetri. Don't worry, it won't be long before they are reunited, but how long will they stay that way? I'm evil, I feel bad about it sometimes. Not enough to change it though.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA how hard I tried not to update this yesterday. I tried not to update today, since it would be a day early, but I failed spectacularly! I won't be home much tomorrow, so that's where I justified updating a day in advance. I'm sure you all don't mind, right? haha I just love you guys so much. There wasn't a day that went by that TMS didn't get at least one new follower/favorite. I hope you all continue to enjoy this! Shout out to Nickaroos, who's keeping the gears turning in my head by asking questions I would have looked over without her. She's the best!

So it seems that you all have decided that Della will have a power. I was actually quite surprised. Out of seven, four of you liked the idea of Della having the ability to wield and manipulate fire. Two of you liked psychokinesis. I myself voted for omnilingual, not that I was partial to the idea or anything. So it looks like Della's going to be fiery. Which, to be honest, now that I think about it she's already been set up as a firecracker with a sharp wit. Thanks for your help, the results of the poll are displayed in case you would like to look for yourself. I'll be deleting the poll at sometime over the weekend. Again, thank you all so much. (I'll be deleting this paragraph in a few days too, don't want to give it up to new readers later on! : D)

Keep your pitch forks to yourself, I won't run with your children and force them to watch Barney reruns, the only thing this animal wants is sustenance, so don't forget to

Feed The Beast

End
file.